

Service Corps offers chance to make a difference

Retirees often look for ways to make a contribution in their community. Perhaps helping youngsters with their reading skills or making a positive impact on the environment appeals to you? If so, the Washington Service Corps is looking for you.

The Service Corps, part of the federal AmeriCorps network since 1994, connects individuals with local non-profits, schools, governmental agencies and faith-based organizations who are striving to deliver services or build projects that meet community needs. These programs include environmental habitat restoration, health and nutrition education, financial literacy and poverty relief – just to name a few. Through the Reading Corps,

members tutor children to help them develop a love of reading.

In return for their service, members receive a modest living allowance, health insurance, training and an educational scholarship. Like any members, seniors can earn an educational award for each term of service completed (up to two terms). Unlike other members, however, those age 55 and older can also transfer their educational awards to a child, step-child, foster child, grandchild or step-grandchild.

The program year for both the Reading Corps and the Service Corps begins in August and September, respectively, so now is the time to apply if you are interested.

To learn more, visit
[Washington Service Corps](http://WashingtonServiceCorps.org)
(washingtonservicecorps.org)
or call 888-713-6080.



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New COLAs established for 2017

New Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) have been established for 2017. COLAs for the Law Enforcement and Fire Fighters' Plan 1 took effect on April 1 and COLAs for all other plans took effect July 1.

COLAs are based on changes in the Consumer Price Index for the Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton area as well as your retirement date. For a complete list of 2017 COLAs, visit the [COLA page](#) on the DRS website.



Pension bills signed into law

More than two dozen pension-related bills were introduced during the 2017 regular session of the Legislature. Of those, four were approved by the Senate and the House of Representatives and signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee:

- **SB 5274** – Amends the definition of “salary” in WSPRS to include voluntary overtime earned after July 1, 2017
- **HB 1709** – Allows PERS members meeting specific criteria to transfer service credit into PSERS
- **SB 5661** – Directs the LEOFF 2 Board to conduct a study of expanding access to no-cost interruptive military service credit for LEOFF Plan 2 members
- **HB 2202** – Deals with eligibility of emergency medical technicians (EMTs) for membership in LEOFF 2

For a complete list of pension-related bills introduced in 2017, see the *Legislation* section of the DRS website (drs.wa.gov/legislative).



Will my benefit be impacted if I return to work?

It's a question many members ask both before and after retirement: can I return to work without impacting my retirement benefit? The answer to this depends on several factors, including where you return to work. For example, if you return to work in the private sector, the federal government or any other non-DRS employer, there is no impact to your retirement benefit.

The answer is a bit trickier if you return to work for a DRS employer. Factors such as how many hours per year you work and if you retired under the 2008 early retirement factors (ERFs) could impact your benefit should you return to work.

One thing to keep in mind that applies to all retirees is that you must have separated from employment before you are considered a "retiree" and therefore eligible to receive a retirement benefit. Separation from employment means that you have quit your job, but other factors are also considered when determining if a member has separated from employment.

These factors include:

- Was there a reasonable expectation between you and your employer that you would return to work for that employer? If so, you are not considered separated from employment.
- How long is your absence? Meaning has it been less than 30 days since you quit your job? If so, separation from employment may not have occurred.
- Did your employer conduct a competitive hiring process to fill your vacancy? If not, then you may not have separated from your employer.
- Were your and your employer's actions consistent with the expectation that your absence from work would be total and permanent? If not, separation has not occurred.

Find more details about separation from employment in [Washington Administrative Code 415-02-115](#). If you have questions about working after retirement, read the [Thinking about working after retirement?](#) brochure on the DRS website or [contact DRS](#).

Looking for your benefit payment?

Here are the remaining dates in 2017 that your monthly retirement benefit will be electronically deposited into your account. If you have not yet signed up for direct deposit, consider doing so at drs.wa.gov/oa. It's quick, easy and reliable.



2017 electronic deposit dates

August 31

September 29

October 31

November 30

December 29